

Rain Threatened, but Strawberries Triumphed.

Story and Photo
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LASALLE

As the rain fell Sunday morning, so did the tears at the Reiner house-hold in Amherstburg.

If the rain didn't stop, Meghan, 6, and Mallory, 3, wouldn't be able to go to the LaSalle Strawberry Festival. Max, age nine months, was also crying, but he's at the age when he cries about everything.

Fortunately, the skies did clear and parents Dan and Debbie were able to take their young family to one of the most popular country-style festivals in Essex County.

"We make a point of coming to this one in particular because it really is geared to kids," said Dan.

Not only were there plenty of strawberries to eat - a food the Reiners have little trouble getting their kids to accept - there were rides and games for all ages. There were also entertainers, magicians and singers who drew smiles and laughs from young and old.

"It's something to do together, absolutely," said Debbie Reiner.

Essex County has a cornucopia of festivals. Tomatoes, corn, apples, peaches, and blueberries are among the fruits and vegetables celebrated annually in the growing season.

"We try to get to all of them for the kids," said Debbie Reiner.

Margaret Brennan, of LaSalle, her two sons, Jason, 6, and Ryan, 4, in tow, said county festivals provide perfect family entertainment.

"There isn't enough to do for kids. Festivals are great for families - bonding together, spending quality time talking and laughing," she said. This year marked a change for the popular festival. The sponsors, the LaSalle Firefighters Association, cut back on the number of strawberries and filled the resulting void with the berry's natural partner - ice cream.



"It seems to be going over well," said Randy Curtis, president of the firefighter's association. "We've had no complaints. Everybody's happy and we like to please everybody," he said.

Almost 10,000 pints of strawberries and 20,000 servings of ice cream were consumed by about 35,000 who attended during the two-day event.

Madeleine Daigle, a Windsor grandmother, said she comes to the festival every year and is a big fan of the red berry. She said strawberries bring back fond memories.

As a young mother, Daigle picked strawberries with her daughters and together they made jam and preserves. Her four daughters have maintained the tradition and always make sure she has something tasty for her toast.

Daigle said she restricted herself to one bowl of strawberries and ice cream. "I'm watching my figure. At least, I'm trying to," she said.

Profits from the festival go toward staging next year's event and to local charities such as the Essex County Burn Unit and LaSalle youth athletic leagues.